REPORT

Hate Is No Game: Hate and Harassment in Online Games 2022

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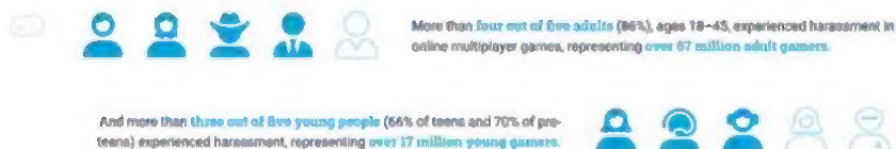

Executive Summary

In 2021, ADL found that nearly one in ten gamers between ages 13 and 17 had been exposed to white-supremacist ideology and themes in online multiplayer games. An estimated 2.3 million teens were exposed to white-supremacist ideology in multiplayer games like *Roblox*, *World of Warcraft*, *Fortnite*, *Apex Legends*, *League of Legends*, *Madden NFL*, *Overwatch*, and *Call of Duty*.

Hate and extremism in online games have worsened since last year.

ADL's annual report on experiences in online multiplayer games shows that the spread of hate, harassment, and extremism in these digital spaces continues to grow unchecked. Our survey explores the social interactions, experiences, attitudes, and behaviors of online multiplayer gamers ages 10 and above nationwide.
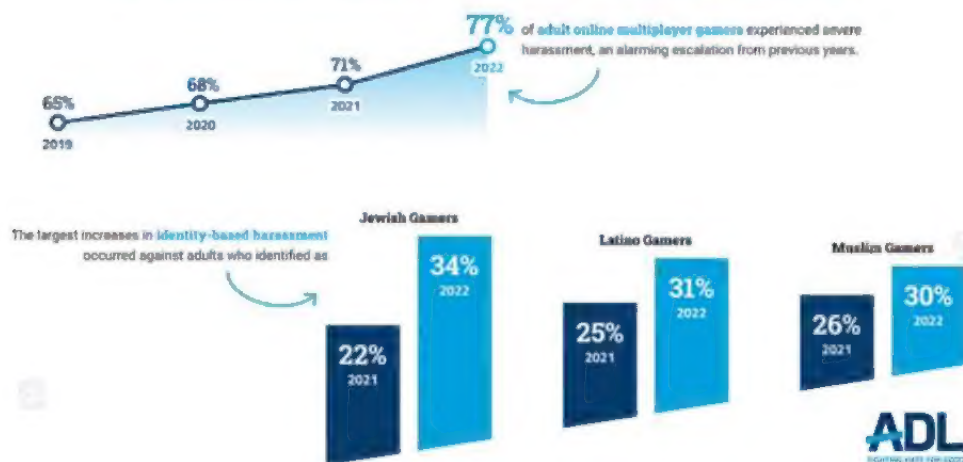
A majority of gamers have experienced harassment in online multiplayer games

More than four out of five adults (86%), ages 18-45, experienced harassment in online multiplayer games, representing over 87 million adult gamers.

And more than three out of five young people (66% of teens and 70% of pre-teens) experienced harassment, representing over 17 million young gamers.

Exposure to white-supremacist ideology on the rise among gamers

Adults' exposure to white-supremacist ideologies in online games more than doubled in 2022.

8% 2021

20% 2022

15%

of young people, ages 10-17, reported exposure to white-supremacist ideologies in 2022.

Harassment is increasing among those in the gaming community

77% 2022 of adult online multiplayer gamers experienced severe harassment, an alarming escalation from previous years.

71% 2021

68% 2020

65% 2019

The largest increases in identity-based harassment occurred against adults who identified as

Jewish Gamers
22% 2021 → **34%** 2022

Latino Gamers
25% 2021 → **31%** 2022

Muslim Gamers
26% 2021 → **30%** 2022

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For the fourth consecutive year, the already-high rates of harassment experienced by a nationally representative sample of nearly 100 million American adult gamers increased. According to the Entertainment Software Association, 76% of gamers in the United States are over 18.

Harassment experienced by teens ages 13-17 increased from last year. For the first time, ADL has collected data on harassment experienced by pre-teens ages 10-12.

The games industry's progress is slow even when compared to that of social media companies, which are hardly exemplars of user safety or accountability. Only one major games company, Roblox Corporation, has an explicit, public-facing policy against extremism. Earlier this year, Wildlife Studios, a mobile-games company headquartered in Brazil, produced the first gaming transparency report that shares data on how a company acted against hate and harassment in its online games, followed by Xbox in November 2022. Transparency reports and policies banning the expression of extremist ideologies are the bare minimum required to fight hate in online games.

The immense popularity of online games means it is likely that you or someone close to you has experienced hate and harassment. More than two out of three Americans—over 215 million people of all ages—play video games, including both online and offline games. The video games industry is a $203 billion market, with the North American video game market generating over $54 billion in 2022.

In focusing on online multiplayer games, this report offers concrete guidance for the government, civil society, and industry to take meaningful steps in making those games safer for all users, regardless of their age or identity.

Introduction

On May 14, 2022, a white supremacist extremist committed a mass murder at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, killing 10 Black shoppers and injuring three others. In the logs of his messages on the social platform Discord, the shooter wrote that a game on Roblox was a key vector in his radicalization.

I'm just saying, I probably wouldn't be as nationalistic if it weren't for Blood and Iron on roblox

Excerpt from archived version of the Buffalo shooter's Discord logs referenced by NBC News journalist Benjamin Goggin.

Our 2022 survey finds that adult exposure to white supremacy in online games has more than doubled to 20% of gamers, up from 8% in 2021. Among young gamers ages 10-17, 15% have been exposed to white supremacist ideologies and themes in online games. Our results and other research suggest that the inability of the games industry to build safe, respectful spaces for their users has made communities within online game platforms so rife with hate that they rival the worst places on the internet, such as the notorious forum 4chan.

Although the connection between video games and violence has been repeatedly disproven, there is a growing body of research examining the connection between the industry's negligence in moderating hate within online games and the normalization of extremist ideologies. In October 2021, the Extremism and Gaming Research Network was launched, bringing together various efforts to study radicalization and online games, as a result of increased interest in this arena.

Unfortunately, there is plenty of grist for this research.

The government of New Zealand released a report on the anti-Muslim attack in Christchurch that clearly showed how the shooter's path to radicalization started in online multiplayer games, where he was able to "openly express racist and far right views" without pushback from the community or the platform. Researchers used anonymized German police case files to investigate the influence of online gaming spaces such as Roblox and gaming-adjacent social platforms like Discord in radicalizing two children under 14. One of the children was drawn to World War II recreations on Roblox, where he befriended someone who eventually invited him to join a far-right Discord server with users who wanted to "liberate the country of all Jews and fags." The study echoed Wired's reporting on extremist activity in Roblox, which found the platform was a fertile environment for fascism, hosting recreations of mass murders and games with slavery.

The games industry cannot claim ignorance of disturbing findings related to extremism and online gaming. At the Game Developers Conference (GDC), a major industry event, two researchers, Dr. Rachel Kowert and Alex Newhouse, discussed worrying signs of extremist normalization in the popular game *Call of Duty* (COD), including the appearance of "RAHOWA," an acronym for "Racial Holy War" that is used as a rallying cry for white supremacists in usernames on COD's leaderboards. The researchers also talked about interconnected, openly extremist networks of users on Roblox and Steam, an online games store and forum. They showed the presence of far-right individuals on gaming platforms, including members of the white supremacist group Patriot Front on Roblox and a former leader of the neo-Nazi group Feuerkrieg Division on Steam.
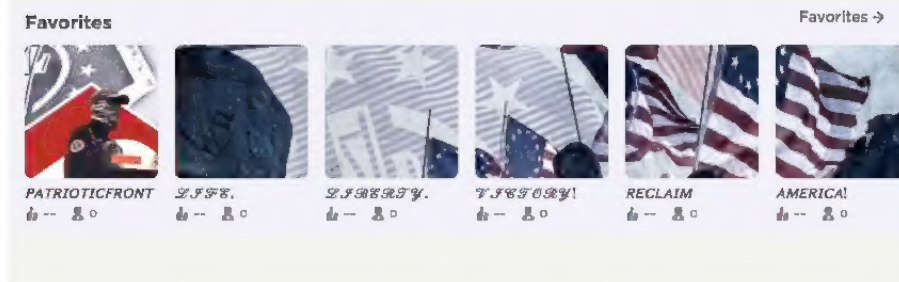
Hardened mobilization networks: Steam
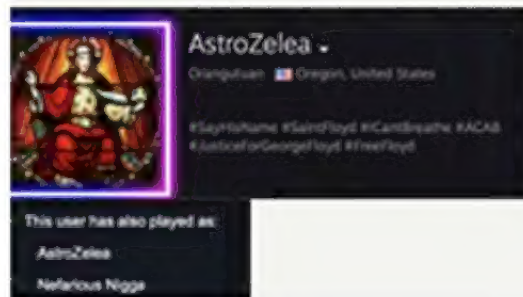
- Ex-leader of Feuerkrieg Division, a UK-, Canada-, and Australia-designated terrorist group
- Currently engaged in propaganda creation for neo-Nazi groups on Telegram

Hardened mobilization networks: Roblox

At GDC, Dr. Kowert shared troubling results from her research finding that many people who primarily identified themselves as gamers also strongly agreed with the beliefs of white-nationalist movements. ADL Belfer Fellow Dr. Constance Steinkuehler presented similar results at the Games for Change Festival, another large industry conference. The UN also recently released a report exploring similar connections between extremism, gamers, and online multiplayer games.

Such research is becoming an issue of national security. The Department of Homeland Security awarded a $700,000 grant to Newhouse and Dr. Kowert in September to expand their research into the connection between extremism and online games.

Despite mounting concern, only one major games company, Roblox, prohibits extremism on its platform. Its policy was published only after Roblox faced significant public and private pressure to moderate hateful content and activity discovered on its platform.

In addition to extremism, another form of hate has flourished for years in online games: misogyny. For the fourth year in a row, our survey shows that gender was the most frequently cited reason for identity-based abuse. At Games for Change, Dr. Steinkuehler noted, "In broader national movements, it is typically antisemitism that lies at the root of white supremacy movements; in games, it is misogyny."
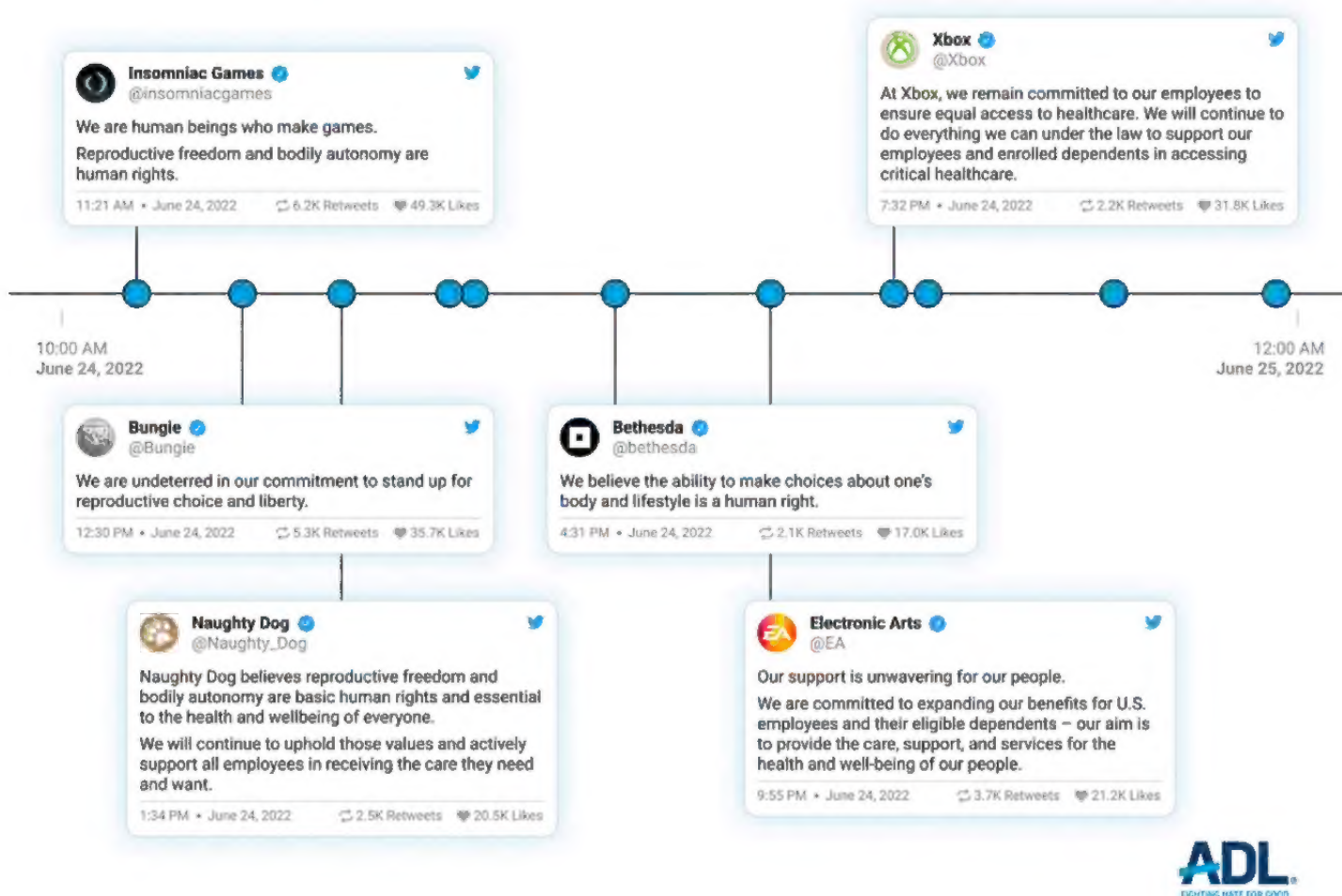
The misogynistic culture of online games is not accidental; one can argue it begins with company culture.

Carlos Rodriguez, the CEO of gaming company G2 Esports, was seen partying alongside noted misogynist Andrew Tate while celebrating the company's world-championship event. Tate was deplatformed by all mainstream social media companies for repeatedly promoting violence against women and perpetuating rape culture, though he was allowed back on Twitter in November 2022 following Elon Musk's takeover of the company. Outrage over the event spread online, and Rodriguez initially refused to disavow his association with Tate. After public pressure, Rodriguez apologized, was suspended from running his company for eight weeks, and subsequently stepped down.

Such an incident points to the glaring hypocrisy of the games industry, where public statements often serve as performative gestures. Misogyny in online games continues unabated, although games companies spoke out against the Supreme Court's reversal of Roe v. Wade and expressed support for their employees' right to bodily autonomy. For this year's survey, we tracked the timeline of public statements by the games industry relative to the gutting of Roe.

The Games Industry's Response to Dobbs

Statements from prominent gaming companies

Insomniac Games @insomniacgames
We are human beings who make games.
Reproductive freedom and bodily autonomy are human rights.
11:21 AM • June 24, 2022 — 6.2K Retweets — 49.3K Likes

Xbox @Xbox
At Xbox, we remain committed to our employees to ensure equal access to healthcare. We will continue to do everything we can under the law to support our employees and enrolled dependents in accessing critical healthcare.
7:32 PM • June 24, 2022 — 2.2K Retweets — 31.8K Likes

10:00 AM June 24, 2022   12:00 AM June 25, 2022

Bungie @Bungie
We are undeterred in our commitment to stand up for reproductive choice and liberty.
12:30 PM • June 24, 2022 — 5.3K Retweets — 35.7K Likes

Bethesda @bethesda
We believe the ability to make choices about one's body and lifestyle is a human right.
4:31 PM • June 24, 2022 — 2.1K Retweets — 17.0K Likes

Naughty Dog @Naughty_Dog
Naughty Dog believes reproductive freedom and bodily autonomy are basic human rights and essential to the health and wellbeing of everyone.
We will continue to uphold those values and actively support all employees in receiving the care they need and want.
1:34 PM • June 24, 2022 — 2.5K Retweets — 20.5K Likes

Electronic Arts @EA
Our support is unwavering for our people.
We are committed to expanding our benefits for U.S. employees and their eligible dependents – our aim is to provide the care, support, and services for the health and well-being of our people.
9:55 PM • June 24, 2022 — 3.7K Retweets — 21.2K Likes

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Additionally, when asking about various controversial topics related to extremism and disinformation, this year's survey asked about the degree to which players experienced discussions of anti-abortion extremism and language connected to the "manosphere." Nearly one in ten adults (7%) were exposed to discussions of these topics that included expressions such as "femoids will pay" or "abortions for black women will help the white birth rate."

The results of this year's survey are more dire than ever. The growing investment of civil society, research, and government in examining the relationship between extremism and online games stands in stark contrast to the industry's refusal to address extremism and misogyny. Extremist activity has grown sharply over the past few years. Democratic institutions are in peril. Thus, all societal actors must act swiftly to stem the tide of hate that afflicts our country.
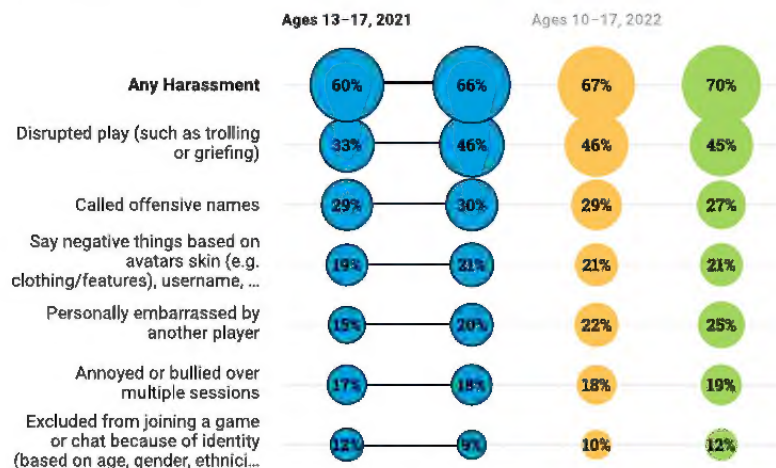
Results

Young People (10-17)

Hate and Harassment in Online Games

Twenty-five million out of 28 million gamers ages 10-17 in the U.S. play online multiplayer games. Our second year of data on young people ages 13-17 showed a 6% increase in harassment of young people from 60% in 2021 to 66% in 2022. Our first year of data on preteens ages 10-12 shows that nearly three out of four (70%) experience harassment in online games. Overall, 67% of young people ages 10-17 experience harassment in online multiplayer games.

Overall Harassment Against Young People

Share of young people who reported experiencing harassment, by year and age group

Sort by   Ages 13–17, 2022   ▼

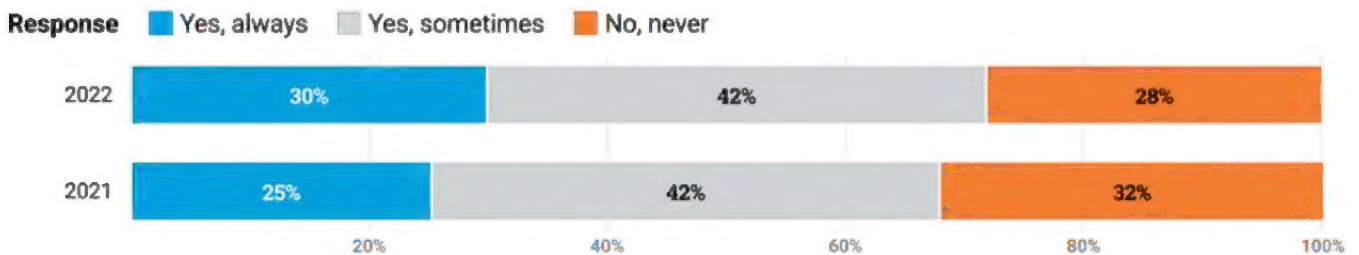|	Ages 13–17, 2021		Ages 10–17, 2022	
Any Harassment	60%	66%	67%	70%
Disrupted play (such as trolling or griefing)	33%	46%	46%	45%
Called offensive names	29%	30%	29%	27%
Say negative things based on avatars skin (e.g. clothing/features), username, ...	19%	21%	21%	21%
Personally embarrassed by another player	15%	20%	22%	25%
Annoyed or bullied over multiple sessions	17%	18%	18%	19%
Excluded from joining a game or chat because of identity (based on age, gender, ethnici...	12%	9%	10%	12%

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As a result of being targeted by hate in online games, 30% of young players said they always hide their identity when playing online (an increase from 25% last year), while 42% said they sometimes hide their identity, consistent with last year's results.

Identity-Based Harassment of Young People

Share of young people, ages 13–17, who reported being harassed based on their identity, by year and age group

2022	●────────────●	**31%**
	Age 10–12 **(23%)** Age 10–17 **(29%)**	
2021	**25%**	

10%   20%   30%

Share of young people, ages 13–17, who reported hiding their identity in online games, by year

Response ■ Yes, always   ■ Yes, sometimes   ■ No, never

	Yes, always	Yes, sometimes	No, never
2022	**30%**	**42%**	**28%**
2021	**25%**	**42%**	**32%**

20%   40%   60%   80%   100%
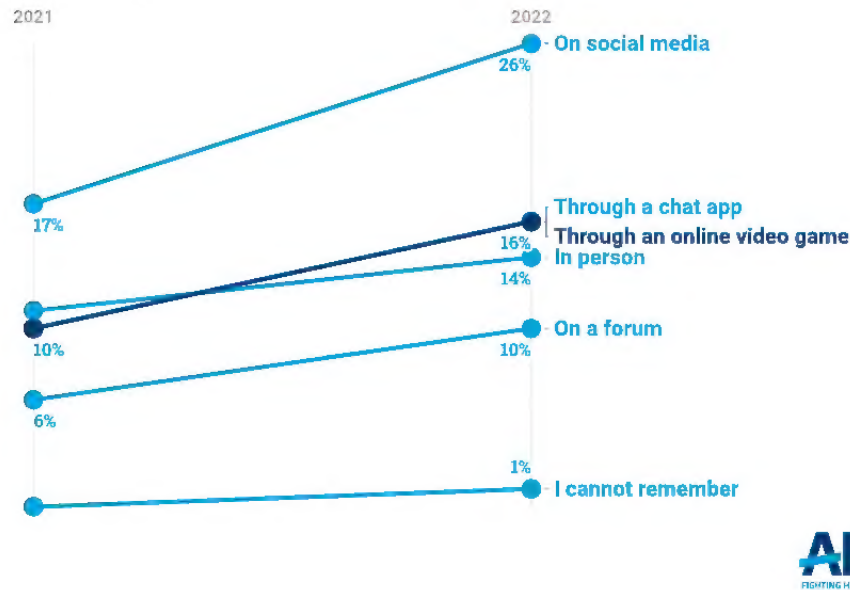
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Exposure to Extremist White Supremacy

We asked young gamers about their exposure to extremist white-supremacist ideologies in various contexts, including online multiplayer games. Specifically, after explaining to respondents the hateful, racist, and antisemitic nature of these ideologies, we asked if they were exposed to people who "believe that white people are superior to people of other races and that white people should be in charge."

We found that 15%, or nearly two in ten, young gamers ages 10-17 were exposed to white-supremacist ideologies in the context of online multiplayer games. The other results presented here pertain to young people ages 10-17 who play online games but encountered white-supremacist ideologies in other contexts.

Young People's Exposure to White Supremacy

Share of young people, ages 13–17, who reported experiencing white
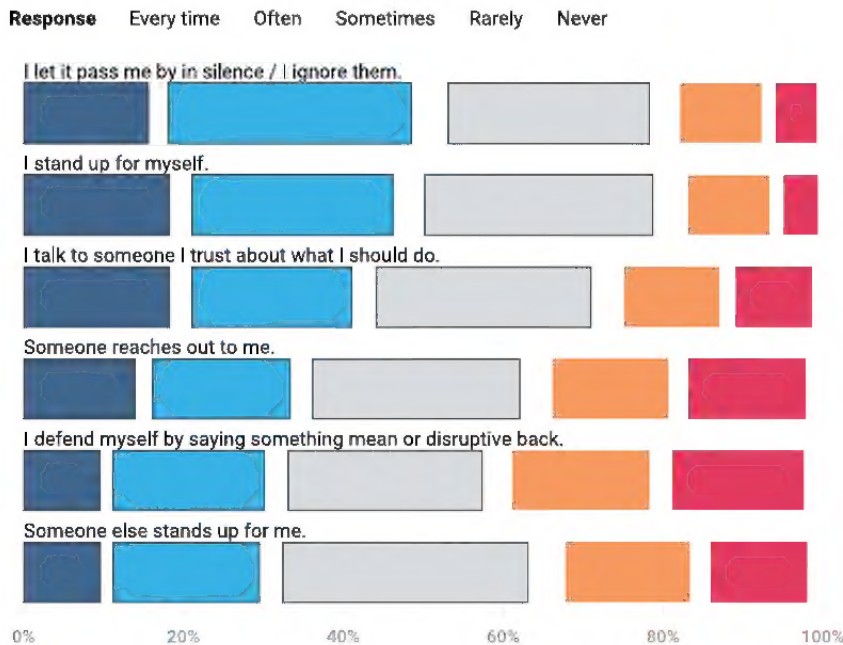supremacy behaviors on the following platforms

2021   2022

- On social media
26%

17%   Through a chat app
                                        Through an online video game
                                   16% In person
                                   14%

                                   - On a forum
10%   10%

6%

                                   1%
                                   - I cannot remember

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Ally Behaviors

This year we asked young people what actions they or others took when they experienced hate and harassment in online multiplayer games. Most often, they either stood up for themselves or ignored the comment. Least often, other people stood up for the target or reached out to them after they were harassed.

Demonstrations of Allyship Among Young People

Share of young people, ages 10–17, who reported the following behaviors
after experiencing harassment

Response   Every time   Often   Sometimes   Rarely   Never

I let it pass me by in silence / I ignore them.

I stand up for myself.

I talk to someone I trust about what I should do.

Someone reaches out to me.

I defend myself by saying something mean or disruptive back.

Someone else stands up for me.

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

The Impact of Hate and Harassment

The harassment that young people experience in online multiplayer games affects their online and offline lives. Continuing the trend from last year, over a quarter of young people who experienced harassment in online multiplayer games quit specific games.
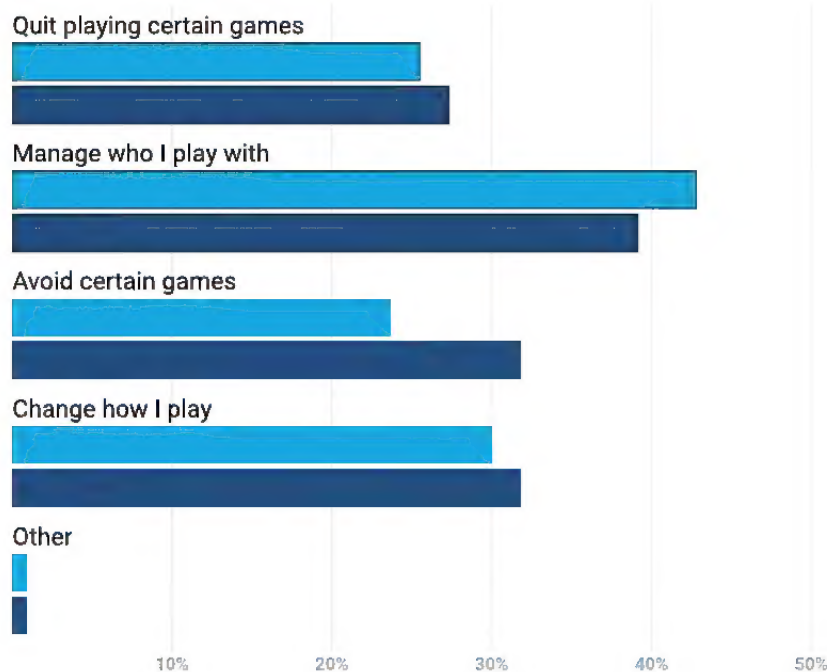
In-game harassment has offline consequences for young people. One in ten young gamers in the U.S. reported that they treated people worse than usual due to harassment in online gaming, while nearly that many (8%) reported that their school performance declined.

In-Game and Offline Impacts on Young People

Share of young people, ages 13–17, reporting the following impacts after experiencing harassment, 2021 vs 2022

View: (In-Game | **Offline**)

Year   2021   2022

Quit playing certain games

Manage who I play with

Avoid certain games

Change how I play

Other

10%   20%   30%   40%   50%
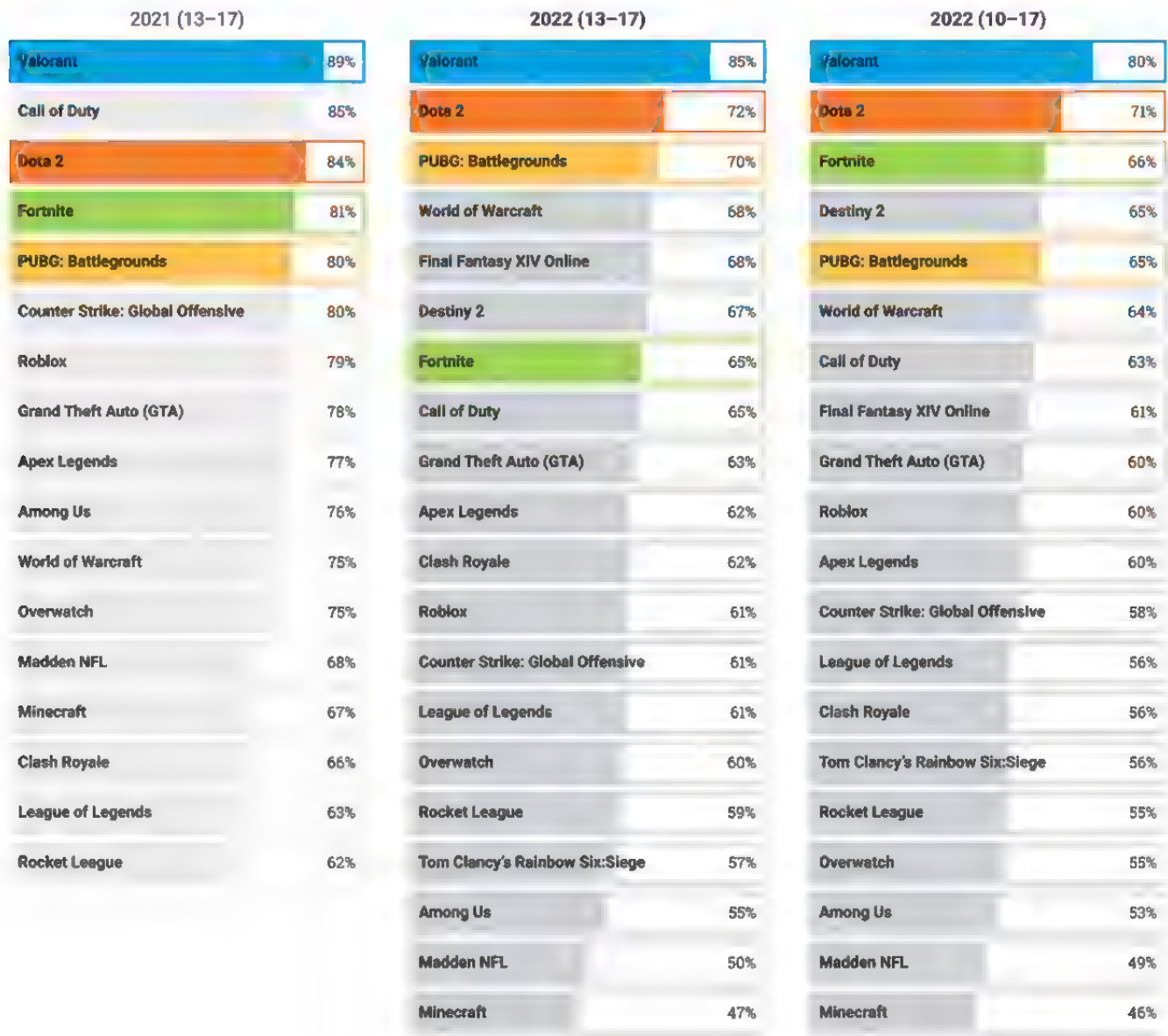
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Harassment by Game

At least 47% of young gamers experienced harassment in every game we included in this survey.

Harassment of Young People, by Game

Share of young people who reported experiencing harassment, by game, year, and age group

2021 (13–17)		2022 (13–17)		2022 (10–17)	
Valorant	89%	Valorant	85%	Valorant	80%
Call of Duty	85%	Dota 2	72%	Dota 2	71%
Dota 2	84%	PUBG: Battlegrounds	70%	Fortnite	66%
Fortnite	81%	World of Warcraft	68%	Destiny 2	65%
PUBG: Battlegrounds	80%	Final Fantasy XIV Online	68%	PUBG: Battlegrounds	65%
Counter Strike: Global Offensive	80%	Destiny 2	67%	World of Warcraft	64%
Roblox	79%	Fortnite	65%	Call of Duty	63%
Grand Theft Auto (GTA)	78%	Call of Duty	65%	Final Fantasy XIV Online	61%
Apex Legends	77%	Grand Theft Auto (GTA)	63%	Grand Theft Auto (GTA)	60%
Among Us	76%	Apex Legends	62%	Roblox	60%
World of Warcraft	75%	Clash Royale	62%	Apex Legends	60%
Overwatch	75%	Roblox	61%	Counter Strike: Global Offensive	58%
Madden NFL	68%	Counter Strike: Global Offensive	61%	League of Legends	56%
Minecraft	67%	League of Legends	61%	Clash Royale	56%
Clash Royale	66%	Overwatch	60%	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six:Siege	56%
League of Legends	63%	Rocket League	59%	Rocket League	55%
Rocket League	62%	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six:Siege	57%	Overwatch	55%
		Among Us	55%	Among Us	53%
		Madden NFL	50%	Madden NFL	49%
		Minecraft	47%	Minecraft	46%

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Adults (18-45)

Hate and Harassment in Online Games

For the fourth consecutive year, harassment in online games has not decreased. More than four out of five adult gamers experience harassment in online multiplayer games—over 67 million American adults.

Among adult online multiplayer gamers, severe harassment increased from 71% to 77%, with roughly 60 million American adults reporting experiences including physical threats, stalking, and sustained harassment.

For the 2022 study, we continued the methodology of the last two years to collect granular and accurate data regarding swatting and doxing. As in the past, our survey defined "doxing" more broadly than the law does because at present there is no consistent legal standard. In our questions, we provided the following broad definitions of doxing and swatting:

- Doxing is making personally-identifying information public.
- Swatting is when a stranger makes a false report to emergency services to target someone.

We then asked respondents who experienced either scenario to describe what happened. In our total figures for swatting and doxing, we included the responses of some players who reported something similar to either behavior or preferred not to elaborate. We removed descriptions unrelated to swatting or doxing from our final numbers. Based on this methodology, 17% of respondents were doxed, and 12% were swatted. While the number of gamers that experience swatting remains constant within the margin of error, the number of adult gamers that experience doxing increased by 6%.

"I had my address and personal phone number leaked to a group of players in the game."
  —20-year-old nonbinary Jewish white bisexual gamer

"I had a person take a picture off my post and use it in a game that I was playing. It was sexually humiliating."
  —43-year-old female white disabled heterosexual gamer

"Having weapons drawn on me when the police believe I have a hostage situation is very scary."
  —24-year-old male Asian American Buddhist heterosexual gamer

"It was regular, honestly, playing games and this one dude had told me straight up he was gonna make the call and I didn't believe him until people were at my door."
  —22-year-old male Latino Muslim disabled heterosexual gamer

Identity or Hate-Based Harassment

Hate-based harassment is defined as disruptive behavior that targets players based at least partly on their actual or perceived identity, including but not limited to their age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, religion, or membership in another protected class.

While identities across the board faced a similar or somewhat increased level of hate in 2022 compared to 2021, **the group that experienced the largest year-over-year increase in harassment was Jewish online multiplayer gamers**, with a 12% increase from 22% to 34%. In the previous three years of this survey, hate targeting Jewish gamers decreased or remained static, making these results even more troubling.

Identity-Based Harassment of Adults

Share of adults who reported experiencing identity-based harassment

Sort by [Total Share | **Year-Over-Year Increase**]

Women

African American

Asian American

LGBTQ+

Jewish

Latino

Muslim

Disability status

2019   2020   2021   2022   2019   2020   2021   2022

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"I stupidly said I was Jewish and they started the myth jokes."
   –42-year-old Jewish white male heterosexual gamer

"People were saying the holocaust didn't happen. It was pretty upsetting seeing as my ancestors went through the unfortunate event."
   –21-year-old Jewish white female bisexual gamer

Extremism, Conspiracy Theories, and Disinformation

Our results found that exposure to white-supremacist ideologies in online games has more than doubled in the last year, from 8% of adults in 2021 to 20% of adults in 2022.

It is important to note that within the context of this survey, we are not referring to "white supremacy" as the historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of white dominance and privilege in the U.S., which enables and maintains systemic racism throughout all segments of society. Rather, ADL uses the term "white supremacy" here to specifically refer to the collection of extremist ideologies and groups undergirding the beliefs that white people should dominate in all ways and exercise power over other identities, that there should be a "whites-only" nation, and that "white culture" is expressly superior to other cultures and must be supported at the expense of other cultures. Here, we specify white-supremacist ideology as a symptom and an outgrowth of systematic white supremacy.

Controversial Topics Among Adults

Share of adults who reported the following topics, by year

2019		2020		2021		2022	
White supremacy	23%	**Coronavirus** should be called Kung Flu/Wu Flu/Chinese virus	17%	**Coronavirus** should be called Kung Flu/Wu Flu/Chinese virus	17%	**White supremacy**	20%
The truth about 9/11	13%	**Antifa** behind George Floyd protests	12%	**Immigrants** bring crime and/or disease into the US	13%	**Coronavirus** should be called Kung Flu/Wu Flu/Chinese virus	18%
The Holocaust is greatly exaggerated	9%	**The Holocaust is greatly exaggerated**	10%	**White supremacy**	8%	**Immigrants** bring crime and/or disease into the US	13%
Vaccinations aren't real	8%	**White supremacy**	9%	**The Holocaust is greatly exaggerated**	7%	**The Holocaust is greatly exaggerated**	10%
The importance and benefits of ISIS	8%					**The fake president** is asking for the tree of liberty to be watered	8%
Gamergate was right	8%					**Abortions** for black women will help the white birth rate	7%

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Similar to what we found in the past two years of the survey, some descriptions of players' experiences in online games are consistent with what ADL would call explicit white-supremacist ideologies, while others are hateful experiences that do not refer to the explicit beliefs of white supremacists. Explicit white supremacy:

"I was playing with some random people online and they initiated a conversation about how other races are supposed to be slave's to the supreme white race."
   –20-year-old male white protestant heterosexual disabled gamer, playing *Call of Duty*

Hateful experience:

"They where calling people n*** and chanting trump 2024."**

  --29 year old male Black or African American gay Protestant gamer, playing *Grand Theft Auto*

Hate may be motivated by an offending player's belief in white supremacy or aspects of white-supremacist ideologies, which are antisemitic, anti-Muslim, racist, sexist, and homophobic at their core. But without more information about the motivation behind hateful remarks, it is difficult to be sure. We decided to include such experiences in our tally, deferring to players' reported experiences of white supremacy. Furthermore, our total included respondents who opted not to share their experiences due to their sensitive nature.

Additionally, our survey asked players about their exposure to disinformation or hate targeting the Asian American community and its alleged connection to COVID 19 as well as disinformation related to the 2020 election. We also asked about antiabortion and extremist misogynist ideologies. Finally, we asked about the prevalence of players' exposure to conversations about Holocaust denial.

Given the growing concern over the problem of white-supremacist extremism in online gaming, we decided to further expand the questions in our survey around this topic. For the first time, we also asked players to state the specific game in which they had experiences with white supremacist ideologies. While this method cannot ascertain the scope of the problem with extremism in any of the games we list here, we believe it sufficient to state that experiences of white-supremacist extremist ideologies are not specific to any one genre or game title, much as this survey has found regarding hate and harassment in the past.

The games where players most often encounter extremist white supremacist ideologies are *Call of Duty, Grand Theft Auto, Valorant, World of Warcraft, Fortnite, and PUBG: Battlegrounds.*

White-Supremacist Extremist Experiences by Game

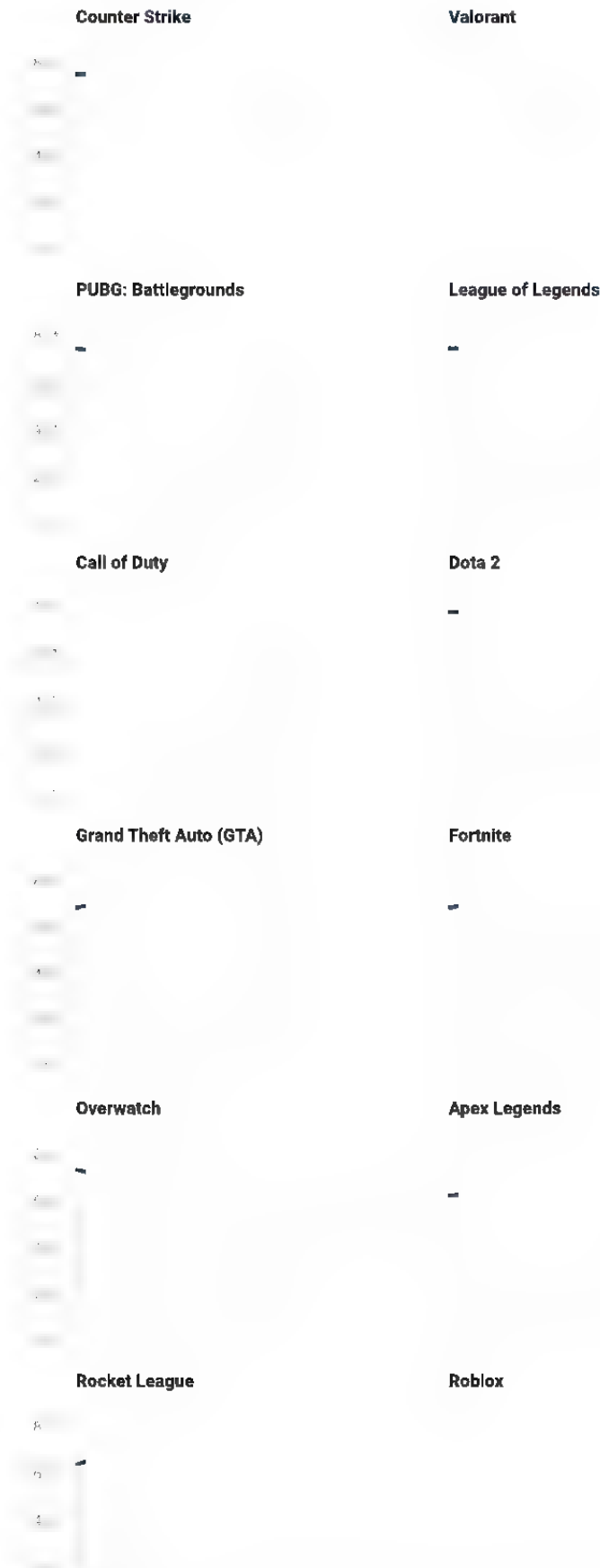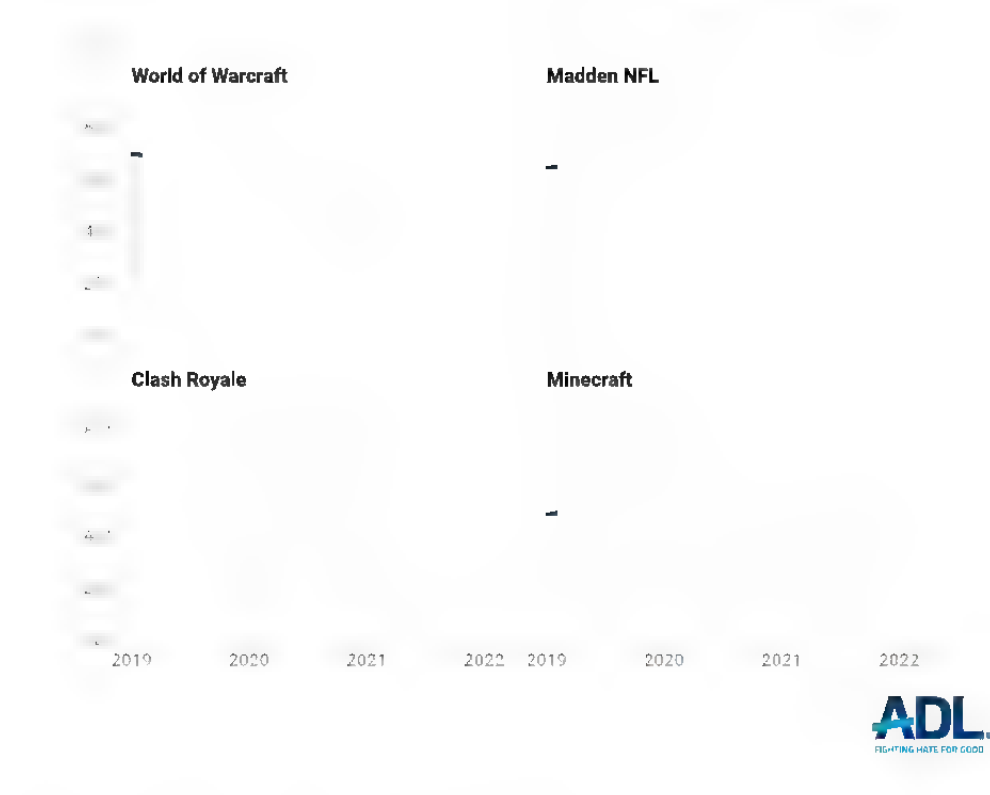Share of people who reported experiencing white-supremacist extremism in the following games, by age group

Adults		Age 13–17		Age 10–12	
Call of Duty	44%	Dota 2	29%	PUBG: Battlegrounds	32%
Grand Theft Auto (GTA)	35%	PUBG: Battlegrounds	27%	Counter Strike: Global Offensive	31%
Valorant	34%	Valorant	25%	World of Warcraft	28%
World of Warcraft	31%	World of Warcraft	24%	League of Legends	24%
Fortnite	30%	Grand Theft Auto (GTA)	23%	Call of Duty	21%
PUBG: Battlegrounds	30%	Overwatch	22%	Grand Theft Auto (GTA)	15%
Counter Strike: Global Offensive	29%	Call of Duty	21%	Dota 2	14%
League of Legends	28%	League of Legends	18%	Fortnite	14%
Dota 2	28%	Counter Strike: Global Offensive	16%	Madden NFL	13%
Madden NFL	23%	Fortnite	15%	Rocket League	12%
Roblox	22%	Minecraft	15%	Valorant	11%
Overwatch	19%	Roblox	13%	Minecraft	11%
Among Us	18%	Madden NFL	12%	Clash Royale	10%
Minecraft	18%	Clash Royale	12%	Destiny 2	10%
Rocket League	18%	Rocket League	11%	Overwatch	8%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six:Siege	17%	Apex Legends	11%	Roblox	7%
Destiny 2	16%	Among Us	10%	Among Us	7%
Clash Royale	16%	Final Fantasy XIV Online	10%	Apex Legends	6%
Final Fantasy XIV Online	14%	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six:Siege	5%	Final Fantasy XIV Online	0%
Apex Legends	14%	Destiny 2	0%	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six:Siege	0%

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Harassment by Game

ADL and Newzoo chose to analyze players' experiences of harassment in several popular online multiplayer games. The increase in harassment among these titles this year is particularly concerning. In 2021, our survey found that the game where players most often experienced harassment was *Valorant*, with 79% of players reporting an experience of harassment in that game. In our 2022 survey, more than 80% of players reported experiencing harassment in six of the titles we asked about: *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* (86%), *Valorant* (84%), *PUBG: Battlegrounds* (83%), *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege* (81%), *League of Legends* (81%), and *Call of Duty* (80%).

Harassment of Adults, by Game

Share of adults who reported experiencing harassment, by game

Sort by (Total Share | **Year-Over-Year Increase**)

Counter Strike

Valorant

PUBG: Battlegrounds

League of Legends

Call of Duty

Dota 2

Grand Theft Auto (GTA)

Fortnite

Overwatch

Apex Legends

Rocket League

Roblox

World of Warcraft

Madden NFL

Clash Royale

Minecraft

| 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |

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The Impact of Hate and Harassment on Players

Our survey looked at the impact harassment in online games had on players and how their experiences affected their gameplay. The number of players who quit playing specific online multiplayer games because of harassment increased for the fourth consecutive year.

The impact of harassment in online games affects how people play. Out of the 67 million American adults who experience harassment in online multiplayer games, only 19% stated that it had no impact on how they play, meaning that harassment shapes the gameplay of over 54 million American adults.

In-Game and Offline Impacts on Adults

Share of adults reporting the following impacts after experiencing harassment

View (Offline | In Game)

Felt uncomfortable/upset   **Been less social**

2019   2020   2021   2022   2019   2020   2021   2022

Taken steps to reduce risk   **Contacted the game company**

2019   2020   2021   2022   2019   2020   2021   2022

Felt isolated/alone   **Contacted the police**

2019   2020   2021   2022   2019   2020   2021   2022

Treated people worse than usual   **Disrupted personal relationships**

2019   2020   2021   2022   2019   2020   2021   2022

Had depressive/suicidal thoughts   **Impacted school performance**

0%

| 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |

Has not affected my day-to-day life

20%

| 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |

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Ally Behaviors

This year we asked adults what actions they or others took when they experienced hate and harassment in online multiplayer games. The most common actions were that people either stood up for themselves or ignored a comment, while among the least common actions were other people standing up for the target or reaching out to them after being harassed.

Demonstrations of Allyship Among Adults

Share of adults who reported the following behaviors after experiencing harassment

Response	Every time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

I let it pass me by in silence / ignore them
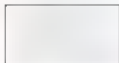
I stand up for myself.
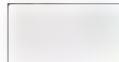
I defend myself by saying something mean or disruptive back.
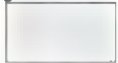
I ta k to someone I trust about what I should do.

Someone reaches out to me.

Someone else stands up for me.

| 0% | 20% | 40% | 60% | 80% | 100% |

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Responsibility for Addressing Hate and Harassment in Online Games

As part of our 2022 survey, we asked gamers for their opinions on different statements regarding how to address hate and harassment in online multiplayer games.

← →

1 of 3

Agreement with Statements

Response   Strongly or Somewhat Agree   Neither Agree nor Disagree   Strongly or Somewhat Disagree

Game companies should...

We also asked respondents who they felt should be responsible for addressing hate and harassment in online games.

Who Is Responsible?

Share of people who agreed with the following statements

	Companies	Government	Community	Prominent figures	Nonprofits	Don't know
Create awareness around hate, harassment and extremism in online games	29%	12%	26%		6%	12%
Increase transparency around how game companies address hate, harassment and extremi...	32%	10%	22%		5%	12%
Create policies to prevent people from posting my private information in online games w...	36%		19%		6%	11%
Hold game companies accountable for enabling online hate, harassment and extremi...	22%		27%		4%	14%
Hold perpetrators accountable for hate, harassment and extremism in online games	28%		22%		5%	11%

Recommendations

For the Games Industry

1. **Implement industry-wide policy and design practices to better address white supremacy.** Games companies should create comprehensive policies prohibiting extremist and terrorist content. They should work with extremism experts such as ADL and others to understand how they can best implement these policies across their platforms.

2. **Release regular, consistent transparency reports on hate and harassment.** Unlike mainstream social media companies, games companies—with the exceptions of Wildlife Studios and Xbox—have not published reports about their policies and enforcement practices. All gaming studios should follow and expand on Wildlife and Xbox's example. Transparency reports should include and share data from user-generated, identity-based reporting, aggregating data around which identities are being targeted in which games. For guidance, companies can consult the Disruption and Harms in Online Gaming Framework produced by ADL and the Fair Play Alliance, which provides a set of common definitions for hate and harassment in online games.

3. **Submit to regularly scheduled independent audits.** Games companies should allow third-party audits of content-moderation policies and practices on their platforms so the public knows the extent of in-game hate and harassment. Audits would determine whether companies' efforts are effective.

4. **Strengthen and enforce policies.** Many companies that created the games included in this survey have codes of conduct or terms of use that prohibit hate or harassment, but they vaguely describe protected groups and violative conduct. We recommend that companies specify protected categories (including race, religion/creed, age, national origin, immigration or citizenship status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, marital status, and partnership status) in their terms of use. In developing these terms of use, we advise games companies to consult individuals and organizations representing groups that experience high rates of harassment.

5. **Improve reporting systems and support for targets of harassment.** Games companies should offer more-effective services and tools for individuals facing or fearing an online attack. They should be able to block multiple perpetrators of online harassment at once rather than undergoing the laborious process of blocking them individually. Games companies must connect individuals facing severe hate and harassment to human employees in real time during urgent incidents.

6. **Build content-moderation tools for in-game voice chat.** Abusers who use voice chat in online games to target individuals often evade detection. The tools and techniques used to detect hate and harassment in voice chat lag behind those that moderate text communication. It is time for companies to catch up.

7. **Include metrics on extremism and toxicity in the Entertainment Software Rating Board's rating system of games.** The ESRB provides information about a game's content, mainly directed at parents deciding whether a game is appropriate for their children to play. Although games companies caution players that the gameplay experience may depend on the behavior of other players, no audits of toxicity and extremism in online games exist. Such audits would allow players or their caregivers to make informed decisions about potential exposure to harmful content or harassment.

For Government

1. **Prioritize regulations and reform.** Legislative models aimed at increasing transparency and accountability from social media companies, such as AB 587 in California, are now real. Similar laws should target the games industry to ensure that it releases clear data on hate and harassment.

2. **Strengthen laws against perpetrators of online hate.** Hate and harassment exist online and off, but our laws have not kept up. Many forms of severe online misconduct, such as doxing and swatting, are inconsistently covered by cyberharassment and stalking laws. Legislators should pass laws that hold perpetrators of severe online hate and harassment accountable for their offenses at both the state and federal levels. ADL's Backspace Hate initiative raises awareness and works at the state and federal levels to fill the gaps and loopholes in our legal system regarding digital abuse.

For Civil Society

1. **Support the research of games scholars and practitioners.** Many games scholars and practitioners in academia have spent decades studying games' potential for both good and harm. Civil society organizations should familiarize themselves with academic research on games, partner with researchers to expand understanding of the risks and benefits of online games, and make their findings accessible to the broader public.

2. **Focus on the voices of marginalized people.** Game design advocacy organizations should amplify the concerns of marginalized communities, who are experts in the issues that affect them. They should bring the experiences of those most targeted by identity-based hate and harassment to the foreground.

3. **Support educational efforts for young gamers and the adults in their lives.** Research on youth and social media offers models for addressing hate and toxicity online, including designing better tools and interventions. Peer education and support are critical to teaching youth to navigate digital tools, along with educating parents and other adults.

For Caregivers and Educators

1. **Learn about and make deliberate, proactive choices about safety controls.** Adults should make informed decisions about whether to allow young players to have in-game communications or to block conversations with strangers via voice or text chat. They should also learn how to implement safety controls, especially for younger gamers.

2. **Demand games companies improve parental safety controls and education.** Safety controls need to be transparent and user friendly for parents and other adults who may not know much about online games or toxicity. Parental accounts should accompany young users. Parents should also be able to ban messages from strangers or access to chat unless adults opt in, and enable approval to add friends or contacts.

3. **Familiarize yourself with the games young people in your life play.** Adults should have meaningful conversations with young people about their experiences in online games. Spending time playing games with young people can increase adults' understanding of the enjoyment and harms of online games.

Appendix: Survey Methodology

ADL, in collaboration with Newzoo, a data analytics firm focused on games and esports, designed a nationally representative survey to examine Americans' experiences of disruptive behavior in online multiplayer games. We collected responses from 2,134 Americans who play games across PC, console, and mobile platforms, including 1,931 responses from people who play online multiplayer games. For young people ages 10-17, we also collected responses from their parents or guardians as part of the screening process.

We oversampled individuals who identify as LGBTQ+, Jewish, Muslim, Black or African American, Asian American and Hispanic/Latinx. We collected responses for the oversampled target groups until at least 125 Americans were represented in each group. Surveys were conducted from June 21 to July 7, 2022. The margin of error based on our sample size is generally 2 to 3 percentage points, though this may be slightly higher when looking at smaller sample sizes.

We asked adult respondents ages 18-45 whether and how often they experienced "disruptive behavior" including:

- Trolling/griefing (deliberate attempts to upset or provoke someone)
- Another online player embarrassing them
- Offensive name calling
- Threats of physical violence
- Sustained harassment (harassment that occurs over multiple game sessions or a longer period of time)

- Stalking (online monitoring/information-gathering used to threaten or harass)
- Sexual harassment
- Discrimination by a stranger due to age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.
- Doxing (having personally identifying information made public)
- Swatting, when a stranger makes a false report to emergency services to target someone

We also asked young people ages 10-17 about their experiences of disruptive behavior but altered the categories slightly. We changed the wording in some cases to focus on disruptive behaviors young people may be most familiar with, and we limited questions about other behaviors to avoid subjecting young participants to additional harm. For example, we did not ask young people about their experiences with threats of physical violence or sexual harassment. We asked teenagers and preteens if they had:

- Players say or do things that have disrupted their play (such as trolling or griefing)
- Been personally embarrassed by another player
- Been called offensive names
- The same people annoy or bully them over multiple sessions
- Players say negative things to them based on their avatar/character's skin (e.g., clothing/features), username, or in-game possessions
- Been excluded from joining a game or chat because of their identity (based on age, gender, ethnicity, etc.)
- Preferred not to say anything
- None of the above

In the analysis provided in this report, we refer to the forms of disruptive behavior experienced by adults or young people, as described above, as harassment.

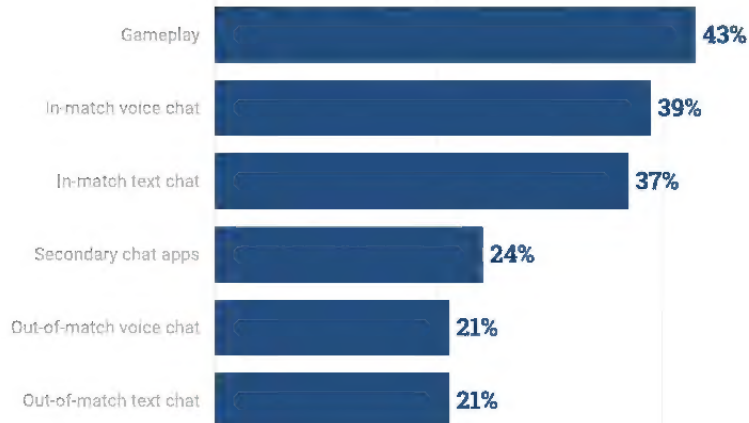## Appendix: Additional Results

Young People (10-17)
Harassment by Delivery Channel

Our survey also examined the delivery channels within online games where young people reported experiencing harassment.
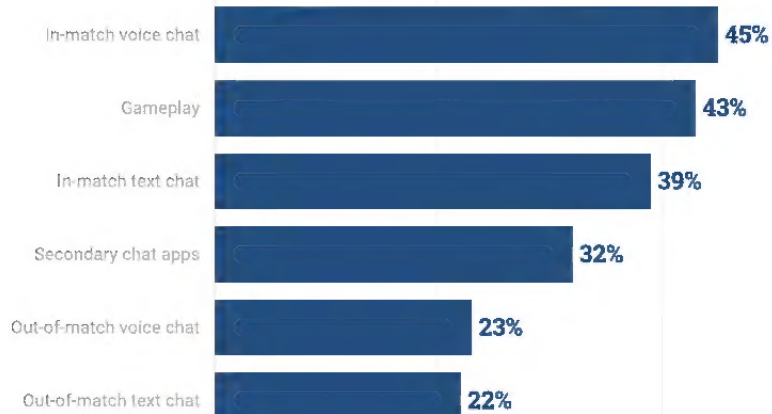
Harassment of Young People, by Communication Mode

Share of young people who reported experiencing harassment via the following modes of communication, by year and age group
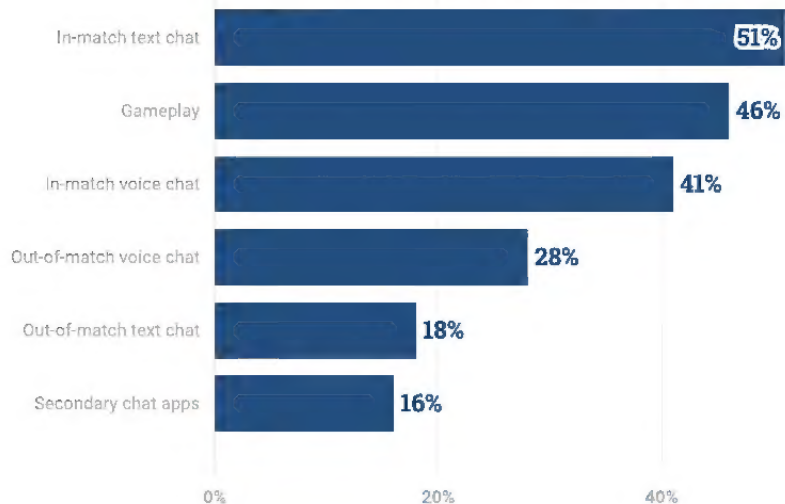
Ages 13–17, 2021

Mode	%
Gameplay	43%
In-match voice chat	39%
In-match text chat	37%
Secondary chat apps	24%
Out-of-match voice chat	21%
Out-of-match text chat	21%

Ages 13–17, 2022

Mode	%
In-match voice chat	45%
Gameplay	43%
In-match text chat	39%
Secondary chat apps	32%
Out-of-match voice chat	23%
Out-of-match text chat	22%

Ages 10–12, 2022

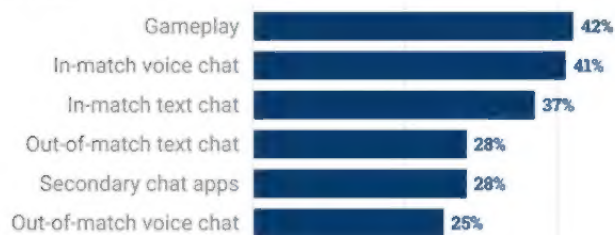| Mode	%
In-match text chat	51%
Gameplay	46%
In-match voice chat	41%
Out-of-match voice chat	28%
Out-of-match text chat	18%
Secondary chat apps	16%

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Adults (18-45)

Harassment by Delivery Channel

To learn more about the environments in which online multiplayer gamers experienced harassment, we asked players about the delivery channels they used. More players reported harassment through voice chats than text chats for both in-game and out-of-game channels.
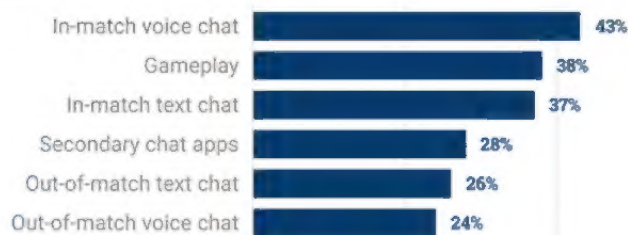
Harassment of Adults, by Communication Mode

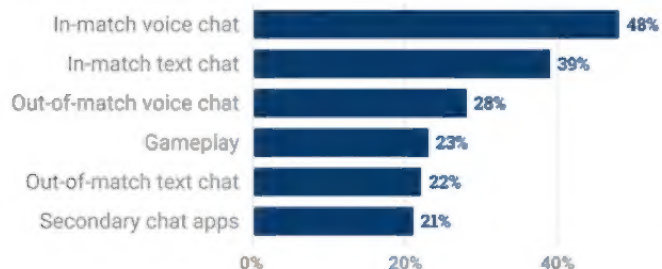Share of adults who reported experiencing harassment via the following modes of communication, by year

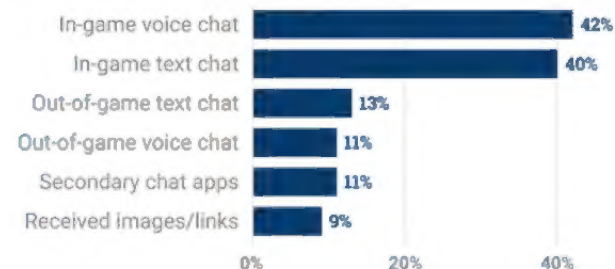## 2022

Mode	%
Gameplay	42%
In-match voice chat	41%
In-match text chat	37%
Out-of-match text chat	28%
Secondary chat apps	28%
Out-of-match voice chat	25%

2021

Mode	%
In-match voice chat	43%
Gameplay	38%
In-match text chat	37%
Secondary chat apps	28%
Out-of-match text chat	26%
Out-of-match voice chat	24%

2020

Mode	%
In-match voice chat	48%
In-match text chat	39%
Out-of-match voice chat	28%
Gameplay	23%
Out-of-match text chat	22%
Secondary chat apps	21%

2019

Mode	%
In-game voice chat	42%
In-game text chat	40%
Out-of-game text chat	13%
Out-of-game voice chat	11%
Secondary chat apps	11%
Received images/links	9%

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Hess Foundation, Inc.

Modulate

Righteous Persons Foundation

The David Tepper Charitable Foundation, Inc.

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